



## 1976-2009: Same Problem

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, March 02, 2009

In 1976, San Jose city leaders emerged from a retreat at the Asilomar Conference Center and declared that their number-one priority was to fix the jobs and housing imbalance in San Jose. Since then San Jose has provided the most affordable housing in the state of California, and tens of thousands of market-rate dwellings; however, San Jose has not shared in the job growth. So while other cities have a "jobs surplus," San Jose still has a "jobs deficit."

San Jose has grown faster than planned. For example, in 1970, our population was 459,000, growing to 629,000 in 1980 and then 894,000 in 1990, with up to almost a million in 2009.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) numbers would have San Jose grow by another 471,000 residents by the year 2040. I serve on the General Plan 2040 Task Force, which has met once a month for more than a year, and will conclude in June 2011. The Task Force is charged with deciding how San Jose will grow by 2040.

This jobs-housing imbalance is one of the reasons San Jose has difficulties in paying for neighborhood services. The tax base for housing is lower in comparison to commercial and industrial uses. Commercial and industrial land produces more revenue and demands fewer city services. Housing produces less revenue and demands more city services, like libraries, parks, code enforcement and the list goes on.

There are vocal paid housing activists that believe San Jose has not done enough for housing. These folks would like to see every parcel paved over and housing put in its place. They don't seem to care if land is zoned for commercial and retail uses; in their point of view, San Jose should just change the zoning and allow more housing instead of industry.

I do not believe San Jose should be the housing hub for the state of California. I support putting housing where the land is zoned for housing, however, I do not support allowing ABAG to have free reign

over San Jose. We could build housing on every last parcel, but our housing would still be more expensive than other parts of the country because of our great climate. Start-up companies continue to grow in more expensive housing areas like San Francisco, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Redwood City and Mountain View. So to say high housing costs deter new business is an odd statement. San Jose is the patron saint of building both affordable and market rate housing in the state of California.

The 2040 Task Force will be moving forward soon with an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which will take about one year to complete, regarding different scenarios. The scenarios range from 179,000 new housing units to 105,000. As for jobs it ranges from 181,000 to 479,000 which is a BIG "what if" scenario.

You see, the city of San Jose does not make jobs; jobs are created by the private sector. What San Jose can do is provide great services that make San Jose attractive to start and grow a business. Personally, I advocate leaving more land for job expansion and less for housing.

"If" we get more jobs than expected (this hasn't happened in the history of San Jose, but there is a first for everything) we can quickly rezone land to accommodate more housing. However, you cannot rezone housing back to industrial unless you're in China.

My ultimate preference is a staged "gate" approach, where we approve an overall total of housing but it is dependent on job growth. So, for example, for every 10,000 units of housing that is entitled, we then wait for 15,000 jobs. Then, and only then, do we move forward with more housing. Otherwise, San Jose will be destined to follow its historical past of providing all the housing and none of the jobs, and get little revenue to pay for city services.

Prior to 2040, we will be able to leverage new areas for housing with high-speed rail so San Jose can be a job center. From Fresno to Downtown San Jose will be one hour with high speed rail.

If you would like to do some reading then take a peek at the [General Plan website](#). The next General Plan Task Force meeting is Monday March 9th at 6:30pm at City Hall.

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